

REMARKS

Re-examination and allowance of the present application is respectfully requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 18 and 22 are allowable, and that claims 11, 20 and 21 contain allowable subject matter that would be allowable if they are placed into independent form.

By the current amendment, Applicants amend claim 1 to include the subject matter of objected claim 11. Independent claim 13 is amended to include the subject matter of objected claim 21. Objected claim 20 is amended to include the subject matter of its base claim (e.g., prior claim 1). Further, Applicants cancel dependent claims 2-12, 14-17, 19, 21 and 23.

In view of the present amendment, Applicants submit that claims 1, 13, 18, 20 and 22 are in condition for allowance, and respectfully request such an indication from the Examiner. Further, Applicants submit that the present amendment eliminates the need to discuss the appropriateness of the rejections set forth by the Examiner, as they are now submitted to be moot.

In this regard, the action taken in the present response should be interpreted as a desire to advance the application to issue, and not as an acquiescence of the appropriateness of the rejections.

Applicants also submit new claim 24 for the Examiner's consideration, which depends from claim 13. Applicants submit that claim 24 is allowable for at least the same reasons applicable to claim 13. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to indicate the allowability of newly submitted claim 24.

Applicants wish to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of claims in the present application. While Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that certain identified features are not disclosed by the references, Applicants wish to clarify that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and the basis for patentability of these claims is based on the totality of the features recited therein.

Pursuant to M.P.E.P. §714.13, Applicants contend that entry of the present amendment is appropriate because the proposed amended claims avoid the rejections set forth in the last Office Action, resulting in the application being placed in condition for allowance, or, alternatively, the revised claims place the application in better condition for purposes of appeal. Further, the revised claims do not present any new issues that would require any further consideration or search by the Examiner, and the amendment does not present any additional claims without canceling a like number of pending claims. Accordingly, entry of the present amendment is respectfully requested.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

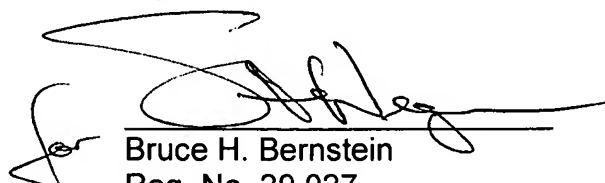
In view of the fact that none of the art of record, whether considered alone or in combination, discloses or suggests the present invention as now defined by the pending claims, and in further view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the Examiner's action and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested and are believed to be appropriate.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should an extension of time be necessary to maintain the pendency of this application, including any extensions of time required to place the application in condition for allowance by an Examiner's Amendment, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fee to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

If there are any questions concerning this application, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
Naohiko NOGUCHI et al.



Bruce H. Bernstein
Reg. No. 29,027

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GREENBLUM & BERNSTEIN, P.L.C.
1950 Roland Clarke Place
Reston, VA 20191
(703) 716-1191

Steven Wegman
Reg. No. 31,438